

An  
Inaugural Dissertation  
on  
Psoriasis, dry or scaly Tetter.

Submitted to the Examination of John Andrew D.P. Roosevelt,  
the Trustees and Medical Professors, of the University  
of Pennsylvania.

For the degree of Doctor of Medicine.

By William Sappington - Maryland

## Introduction<sup>2</sup>

My principal intention in writing this Essay, was to call the attention of Physicians to a remedy which has not I believe, been recommended in any author for the cure of Psoriasis: not to advance any thing original, as respects the causes and symptoms of this cutaneous disease; the description of which I have taken the liberty of transcribing from Dr. Willans Book on cutaneous diseases, which contains a more accurate detail of the symptoms than I could have written, had the time I devoted to writing this Essay been more considerable. Presuming that I have satisfied the Professors that my object was not to have concealed the authors name from whose book Doctor most of the symptoms of Psoriasis; I now make some observations on the subject of this dissertation.

22 Sept 1799

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Psoriasis is characterised by a tough, and scaly state  
of the cuticle, sometimes continuous, sometimes in separate  
patches of various sizes, but of an irregular figure, and  
for the most part accompanied with Chagads or fif-  
sures in the skin, sometimes as an eruption of papule  
in various figures, attended with roughness, itching,  
Chaps, &c. Before I proceed to a particular account  
of this disease, it is proper to remark that the same  
has been described by some medical writers under  
the denomination of Psora or Scabies secca, by others  
under that of impetigo.—

This disease has been described as appearing under many  
forms; as Psoriasis diffusa, Psoriasis palmata, Psori-  
asis interlata, which last was termed by the an-  
cient Psora Agra; rough, and irritable Psora;  
Psoriasis gyrate, Psoriasis guttata, Psoriasis labialis,  
and Psoriasis infantiles: but not having observed any  
of the forms of this disease but the two first, I shall  
confine my observations principally to them, believing  
at the same time that the remedy I shall advocate  
and most confidently recommend is applicable  
and may be beneficially applied to every form of  
this complaint.—

The persons most subject to these various forms of  
disease, are those of the cutaneous species, position, and  
those that have a full languid pulse, particularly  
weak and irritable women who are in general  
more predisposed to this disease than men.

It also frequently occurs in young females labouring under Chlorosis, and proves in that case very obstinate. The opinion given by Mercurialis, Sennertus, and others, that the Dry, or Scaly Fitter may be communicated by contagion, has been properly contradicted by Dr. Willis. I have known women affected with this disease for 4 years without ever hearing of its being communicated to their husbands. There is perhaps more reason in the observations made by Hoffman, that a disposition to this disease may be transmitted hereditarily; as I have observed it in more than one family, in these I do not think it could have been communicated by contact, or by having lived on the same kind of Element, as it would not appear until they were married and had been separated for years from their parents.

Causes.—The causes of this disease are in much obscurity. Some have supposed them to increase hunting meats, or custaceous fishes, along with the too liberal use of acid wines, bad malt liquors, &c. But I believe the Disease often originates from occasional causes, which are much slighter, hence a more immediate operation. Good diff- culty of digestion, eating too great a quantity of cold and fruits, the unseasonable use of the cold bath,

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bath, large draughts of cold water taken when the body has been heated by exercise, and some improper viands, as Milk and fish, are the circumstances to which patients suffer the complaint when it appears in a sudden eruption on the skin: and such causes will I apprehend, be deemed sufficient to excite the disease in those who are predisposed by constitutionally. The external application of cold, the body when heated, has been mentioned as a cause of the complaint as well as the internal use of cold drinks, &c. It matters not in what manner the body be heated, whether by heat of fires, rooms, or by exercise, as cold produces the same effects in all such cases. Hence such persons are especially liable to it whose ways of life subject them to such vicissitudes, as Smiths and other trades, that oblige those who work at them to be near fires, or in heated rooms, and such as use violent exercise or labour, as in the huntingmen, porters, and such like, who are too fond to indulge their appetites without caution.

Women who are exposed to the same sudden changes of temperature, are liable to the same disease, as Cooks, &c. It is proper to observe that the larger is much less in those who take cold liquors the time they are heated with exercise or labor, than if they continued to pursue their labour sometime after drinking, than if they leave off their work immediately. The season of the year or temperature of the air materially contributes towards the production of this disease.

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It generally occurs, according to my observation, in the spring season, when the changes of the atmosphere are most frequent and severe. But on this point medical authors speak with some diversity of sentiment. Hippocrates enumerates them among the spring diseases; but Avicenna places them among the autumnal diseases.

**Symptoms.** I shall only describe the symptoms of the Psoriasis diffusa, and Psoriasis palmaris, not having as I have observed seen any other distinct forms of this disease. The Psoriasis diffusa <sup>firstly</sup> spreads into large patches irregularly circumscribed, reddish, rough, and shabby, with scales interspersed. It commences, in general, with numerous minute asperities, or elevations of the cuticle more perceptible by the touch, than by sight. In the course of two or three weeks all the intervening cuticle becomes rough, and shabby, appears red, and raised, and resembles the likes of the skin sinking into deep furrows; the scales which form upon them are ~~slight~~ <sup>moderately</sup> often slight and repeatedly exfoliate. Some diffuse, cases without any previous eruption of papules, a large portion of the skin becomes dry, harsh, reddish, and scaly as before described. In other cases the disorder commences with separate patches of an uncertain form and size, some of them

them being small and some much larger. The patches gradually expand till they become confluent, and nearly cover the limb or part affected. The *Bacillus diffusa* is attended with a sensation of heat, and with a very troublesome itching, especially at night. The raps or pustules in the skin, which usually make a tail of this complaint, are very sore and painful, but seldom discharge any fluid. Should any part of the diseased surface be forcibly excoriated, there issues out a thin lymph mixed with comedo-like bubbles of blood, which slightly stains, and stiffens the skin, but soon concretes into a thin dry scab. This is again succeeded by a white scab, gradually increasing, and spreading in various situations. As the roughness, raps, &c. disappear, a new cuticle is formed, at first red, dry, and wrinkled, but which, in two or three days, has resumed the proper texture. Symptoms of general disorder attend the first appearance of the *Bacillus diffusa*, as headache, in appetite, pains in the head, sapidity, the stomach; pains, cramps and coldness of the extremities, with a sense of universal languor and debility. During the progress of the eruption, these symptoms abate, or entirely disappear, but they for the most part, precede any return of

of the complaint, which usually take place of that winter or early in the spring. The duration of the Psoriasis is from one to four months. If, in some constitution, it does not then disappear, but becomes to a certain degree permanent, there is but an aggravation, or extension of it, about the usual period of its return. In other cases, the disease at the several returns, differs much as to its extent, and also with respect to the violence of the preceding symptoms.

The Psoriasis palmaria is a very obstinate variety of Tetter and is nearly confined to the palms of the hand. It commences with a small, harsh, flat, off-white, scaly patch, which gradually spreads over the whole of the palm, and sometimes appears in a slighter degree on the inside of the fingers, and worst. The surface feels rough from the detached and raised edges of the scaly laminae. The cuticular pustulations are deep, and sit at the bottom longitudinally in various places, so as to bleed on stretching the fingers. A sensation of heat, pain, and stiffness attend this complaint. It is worst in winter or spring, and occasionally disappears in autumn or summer, leaving a soft dark red cuticle: but many persons are troubled with it for a series of years, experiencing only slight remissions. Every return of the disease aggravates it, and is succeeded by an increase of that on the

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Shoemakers have the Brawner palsmaea locally,  
from the irritation of the wax they constantly em-  
ploy. In Braziers, Tinmen, Silversmiths, &c. The  
complaint seems to be produced by their handling  
red metals. A long predisposition to it may give  
it to different occasional causes.

of the pa  
URE - The remedies used in these two forms  
of this disease may be divided into internal and  
external; the first are only requisite in those  
cases that are attended with a general disease  
of the system, as with syphilis which not  
uncommonly occurs. <sup>2dly</sup> In those attended with  
tightened or inflammatory action of the arterial system  
1st. The most painful with much local inflammation;  
and second 2dly In those occurring in debilitated persons  
or from attendant with a prolixity of the system in general.  
When there is reason to believe from the existing  
symptoms, or from the history of the case, that the  
person is affected with syphilis, which a brown copper  
coloured surface indicates, a mercurial course  
is absolutely necessary, and if it has been of long  
continuance, other auxiliaries should be used with  
the mercurials, as Meyerson or the Lisbon diet drink;  
together with these the local application to be here  
after mentioned should be used -  
When with the local application, there appears to be  
the want of the activity of the pulse much arterial excitement;

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or from pain and inflammation in the affected parts; the system in general is called into sympathy, the depletion of fluids are indicated, and for this purpose purging with Calomel and Saltp, or Sals. rect. &c. & a whole species will be one of the best modes of dieting; with which we should use gentle sudors, or antimonials, particularly those applicable in perspiration. Should the inflammatory symptoms be violent, which may be known by the activity of the pulse, hardness of the parts, especially if the person be of the sanguineous disposition; bleeding will be absolutely necessary, which may be done and repeated if requisite during the use of the cathartics and diaphoretics. When using these consider abstaining and our diet, and diuretic drinks should be ordene with a strict adherence to cleanliness.

In the third case or those accompanied with a general debilitated state of the moving fibres or system generally; Tonics should be given to restore the proper tone or power of the system: and for this purpose the vegetable, or mineral Tonics, as the nature of the case may require should be used; allowing the patient generous diet and drink in some cases where there did not appear to be any general disordered action, I have seen Calomel used as an alterative in doses of three or four grammes every nine hours.

very other night with considerable benefit. —  
In cases of obstinate long continued Petechia Dr Rush ob-  
served in his Lectures we should approach them  
with a trembling hand; as he conceived the Stimulus  
the pain and irritation was a support to animal  
life; in such cases we should introduce species  
a suppulsive we attempt the cure; which I think would  
be less painful and more convenient to the person  
labouring under these cutaneous affections than the  
most convenient part of the body with equally  
good effects. —

There have been many external Remedies recommended  
and used in this cutaneous disease; some of  
which following ~~have~~ I have seen used with very ex-  
cellent effects and we are told most of them  
are performed cures. They are 1<sup>st</sup> A solution of  
fibrinous tissue of Mercury in Spirit Water which I believe  
has often cured this disease when not very obstinate  
2<sup>d</sup> Ointment of Nitrate of Mercury, 3<sup>rd</sup> Solutions of Super-  
natant Sulphate of Copper, which I have been informed has  
cured this disease 4<sup>th</sup> Strong Cider Vinegar applied  
and left every day I have seen cure it after some days  
but however little Ammonia had been used without effect;  
5<sup>th</sup> Tarr Aimento has been often used and suc-  
cessfully with much benefit, particularly when  
mixed with a small quantity of Sulphur; all  
these

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There are many other applications have been undergoing  
are informed with the effects of removing the diseased  
but I have known most of them used without any ordinary  
relief in several cases, all of which yielded afterwards  
=wards to a more efficacious and less painful  
remedy; which I can recommend with much  
confidence, having never seen it used without  
its being attended with more or less <sup>relief</sup>, and that in  
a very short time. This is the extract of Cattaceous  
which I believe to be a remedy that may be applied obscurely  
to every form of Osoriasis with considerable benefit, especially  
particularly the Osoriasis diffusa several cases of the  
I have seen completely cured by its application to the  
affected parts three or four times a day; or as often as  
the stinging and burning in the diseased parts require it,  
which distressing symptoms it removes in a very  
short time after its application. I generally use its extract  
in the following manner; the extract to be made thus  
into a very fine powder and well mixed with a little  
much Sweet cream or Olive oil (The former preferring the  
as will make it into ointment of common consistency  
as soon as it is mixed it should be spread on linen  
clothes and applied; never mixing more at one time, as  
there is sufficient to dress the diseased parts.  
If it does not cure the complaint as soon as is  
expected, it should be persisted in for more  
and continued as long as any appearance of disease  
is to be seen. Some ~~have~~ <sup>have</sup> used for six months  
before the patient was cured, tho' she had used  
the

have been used many remedies before <sup>13</sup> it was resorted to, which  
caused me to think it was more obstinate than  
any other case.

It is difficult to explain satisfactorily its mode of  
action in curing this disease. May it not be  
that the virtue of its astringency blended with a quantity  
of mucilaginous matter? I am inclined to think its  
effect depends much on these two principles,  
may be from observing their good effects when united in  
terrible but due proportions, applied to many ulcerated surfaces  
and caused by other causes. —

To illustrate the good effects of the extract of  
the bark in curing this disease, I will take the  
means in stating two very reactory cases that yield  
well to its external use after most of the commonly used  
total medicines, such as I have mentioned had been used  
and with much ease and persisted in for several years,  
turning away from them as diluted by their physicians, with  
no consequent their experiencing any relief. —

The first case was Mrs M. — aged thirty five, who  
was affected with the Moriasis diffusa, before descri-  
bed; extending over the cutaneous surface of her  
limbs, arms, neck, face, and ears, they being com-  
pletely occupied by the disease; attended with pain  
and considerable itching which caused her to scratch  
the parts so as to exoriate the diseased skin, from which  
there would frequently be a discharge of yellow  
coloured

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coloured lymph. In this situation she had been for some time making use of the before mentioned common Remedies, before she applied to my practice, who gave her three or four ounces of the powder extract, directing her to use it in the manner I before observed it should be used; in two weeks she again applied for some of the same powder, observing that it removed the burning and stinging like a charm and that she believed it would cure her, the disease being considerably removed. She then gave her a quantity, as he thought sufficient to cure her, and it did to all appearance. Remove the applications of this powder: in six or seven weeks the disease by an alteration of its appearance, she had recourse once more to this most useful of all applications yet known; and as it completely eradicated this very obstinate cutaneous disease. It is now more than five years and a half, and continues well in every respect. When she first came to my practice, the parts affected with the extract applied to my practice, the parts affected with the extract considerably to remove which she took during the first week two, or three, active purges of Calomel and Salap, and afterwards small doses of Tartarate of Antimony, so as to produce a gentle diaphoresis to wash off the disease: to this it is only necessary she to apply, that she had taken, frequently before she recd by

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ne powde  
the Psoriasis diffusa for the greater part of five years, b  
and during the same time she made use of this extract; observing which time she  
I would have been under the care and direction of a eminent a  
and physician as any in Maryland; who made use of every  
sufficient external and internal remedy that is generally used to  
remove such cases until he despaired of curing this often fo  
midable disease. Some months afterwards her hus  
band hearing of several cures made by the application  
of this extract, requested my preceptor to visit his wife who after  
having examined the affected parts, which were her  
ss and hands; and being informed by what remedies  
she had used without effect, proposed the use of  
this extract; which was applied with the effect of  
stopping the disease; but he (my preceptor) conve  
ring that the cure might be expedited by the appli  
cation of a solution of the Muriate of Mercury, diluted  
to wash the affected parts with it and not use the  
extract until he should see her again; which di  
rection she strenuously obeyed for twelve or fourteen  
days, when she was compelled to lay the solution by  
consequence of the inflammation and pain pro  
duced by its application; observing these painful  
and

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and destroying effects, he once more resorted to the use of the extract which was continued for a considerable time, tho' not without performing a complete cure to the great satisfaction of the lady and her husband. When using the extract she took occasionally a dose of Calomel for the first two weeks; & I cannot think had any effect in removing the case, because there was at that time very little perceptible alteration; and during the use of the extract after the solution of the mercury, Mercury had been applied, she did not use any internal medicine: from which I think it may be presumed that the cure was produced by the application of the extract.

What I have said respecting the treatment of Psoriasis diffusa, is applicable to the management of the Psoriasis palmaria; with this exception, that it does not require the exhibition of internal medicines as frequently as the former; being more generally a local affection, which seldom or never have required any other medicine than the extract used as directed in the management of the Psoriasis diffusa. If there should happen to be any constitutional derangement it will be necessary to use the internal remedies recommended in

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during the management of the Psoriasis diffusa  
varying them as the state of the system may require,  
as I have never seen any other forms of Psoriasis,  
than those two the symptoms of which I have  
enumerated; I shall not give any description of their  
symptoms, but will only observe it is my opin-  
ion from the success attending the use of this ex-  
periment in the Psoriasis diffusa, and Psoriasis pal-  
maria, that it would be one of the best external  
applications to the parts affected with these  
spontaneous forms of disease; they being in my  
opinion different modifications, or grades of  
the same disease affecting different parts and  
in some cases being more violent. In such  
acute cases internal Remedies, particularly  
cathartics should be used with the  
external Remedies recommended in the Psoriasis  
diffusa.

more  
we have now, gentlemen concluded my Inaugural  
oration I am fully sensible of its many imperfec-  
tions; for which my only apology is the short time  
I have been allowed to compose it. To conclude without  
turning my most cordial thanks to the professors of  
medicine in the university of Pennsylvania, for the  
indness and attention shown me, and the many  
opportunities

Opportunities of acquiring <sup>18</sup> useful knowledge which they have severally afforded, would argue the greater ingratiate.

that happiness and prosperity may attend you all, gentlemen, is my most sincere wish.

ledge to us  
the greater  
attend you  
wishes.

Yours truly  
John C. Frémont

Regd.

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